
UN Human Rights Council
43rd Regular Session – 16 June 2020

Item 9 – General Debate

Mr. Yoel Mester
Deputy Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations in Geneva

Mr. Vice-President,

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented formidable challenges in many areas, and it has also served to propagate a new wave of hatred and bigotry, where the Jews and Israel are once again used as scapegoats.

Various online and offline platforms have been dominated by intolerable anti-Semitic propaganda, accusing the Jews of intentionally spreading the disease in order to disrupt the world economy or earn profits from the potential vaccines.

Similarly, religious leaders in the Arab world, pro-BDS groups and even official state media in countries such as Iran, have exploited the pandemic to defame Israel, with racist conspiracy theories. Among those that Israel developed the virus to eliminate Palestinians, or that it is a Zionist plot aimed at reducing the Muslim population worldwide.

Mr. Vice-President,

The 2015 Declaration of the Global Forum on combatting Cyberhate and Antisemitism on the Internet calls on States to adopt effective measures to combat this phenomenon, including with new legislations. This has to be the result of a joint effort on the part of governments and technology companies.

On another note, the human rights mechanisms, including this Council and its Special Procedures, and even the CERD Committee, have a responsibility to lead by example when it comes to impartiality and the rejection of discrimination. Unfortunately, when it comes to Israel they too often fail to do this.

Thank you.